

Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority

Megiddo

Battlefield of Armageddon

English



Cover Photo:

The eighty meter-long Megiddo water tunnel,
dug during the Iron Age. This tunnel ensured a
secure supply of water from the nearest spring—
even when Megiddo was under siege.

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Megiddo

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Across the vast distances separating the two great kingdoms of the ancient Near East, Egypt in the south and Mesopotamia in the north, Megiddo is a name that has inspired awe and wonder down through the millennia. Today, although the tell stands silent amidst the pastoral charms of the Jezreel Valley, echoes of the din and clash of ancient battles that raged here can still be heard.

Hegemony over Megiddo, straddling a narrow strategic stretch of road leading from the Mediterranean coast to the fertile Jezreel flatlands, ensured unlimited freedom of access to the *Via Maris*, the region's prime international highway that linked the river kingdoms of the Nile and the Euphrates. Its position on the road made it the humming mercantile hub of the region, as great trading caravans stopped here to exchange their goods at lively markets.

The centrality of Megiddo to the history of the region has

left an indisputable mark: archaeologists have determined that the twenty acre tell of Megiddo boasts remains of twenty-five cities representing every single period of ancient history in the Land of Israel.

The first people to inhabit Megiddo arrived in the sixth millennium BCE, during the Neolithic period. Graffiti of human figures, incised on the rocks during this period, may have been the work of these first settlers and may have had cultic or magical significance.

By the fourth millennium BCE, the beginning of the Chalcolithic period, the people of Megiddo had begun to coalesce into a political and cultural entity.

Later, during the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3300 BCE), the earliest known temple at Megiddo was constructed on the tell. That period saw the city make what were probably its first international contacts: pottery shards with cylinder seal impressions which show connections to Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt were discovered in excavations.



Courtesy of the Israel Museum



The cusp of the third millennium was a time of construction for the settlement. A massive wall, possibly a retaining wall for one of the town's important structures, was built at this time.

So was Megiddo's famous altar: a one-and-a-half meter-high circular stone structure that presumably served as an altar of sacrifice. In the ensuing centuries, at least three more temples were constructed in the sacred precinct as the altar continued in service and the town continued to expand.

By the Intermediate Bronze Age, around 2000 BCE, the city was abandoned for approximately 200 years, perhaps the result of unfavorable climatic conditions.

But the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, in the 20th century BCE, was a watershed for Megiddo: it became a strongly fortified city-state, a status which it held until the Bronze Age ended in 1200 BCE.

This period witnessed Egyptian economic domination of Canaan—a prerequisite of which was control over Megiddo—reach its zenith. Massive walls, a

sure sign that the city had amassed both wealth that required protection as well as the human resources and organization for construction, were built around Megiddo. These walls were constructed from mud brick on stone foundations and supported by a glacis, or a slanted fortification.

The first reference to Megiddo in a written source—and the first recorded battle in history—dates from the Late Bronze Age. It is a detailed account of



the 1479 BCE campaign of Pharaoh Thutmose III to reassert Egypt's dominion over territories in Canaan. His most formidable challenge was presented by the Mitanni, a people who came from the area of northern Syria that the Egyptians knew as "the marshes of Naharin."

The details of the battle—carved on the walls of the Temple to Amun in Karnak, Upper Egypt—reveal a lively debate between Thutmose and his generals over which route to take in order to conquer Megiddo. The generals preferred a safer yet circuitous approach (as opposed to the direct yet

Opposite page, above:

A map of the ancient Near East shows the strategic location of the Holy Land and Megiddo.

Opposite page, below:

One of the magnificent hoard of 382 items known as the "Megiddo Ivories," dating from the fourteenth to the twelfth centuries BCE. This is an ivory of a human figure.

Above:

One of the Megiddo Ivories. This ivory may have been used for decorative purposes on a wooden box.

Center:

One of the best known finds unearthed at Megiddo, this seal impression is inscribed with the ancient Hebrew words "to Shema, servant of Jeroboam."



Courtesy of the Israel Museum

dangerously narrow route preferred by Thutmose): "How is it possible," said his generals, "to march [upon] this road which becomes narrower? It is [reported] saying 'The enemy are there, ready...Will not horse go behind [horse, the troops] and the people likewise? Shall our vanguard be fighting, while the [rearguard] is yet standing...?'"

But the king's will prevailed. He completely surprised the Canaanite troops who were waiting to defend Megiddo at one of the more obvious approaches, some distance away from the city.

Thutmoses' troops, however, turned to pillage the countryside, allowing the defenders of Megiddo time to recoup inside the city. Therefore, it actually took the Egyptians five months to complete the capture of the city.

During the Late Bronze Age, Megiddo became the region's cultural and political giant. Eight

letters mentioning Megiddo, written in cuneiform wedge-shaped characters, were discovered in the fourteenth century BCE archive of El-Amarna, Egypt. Six of these were sent by Biridiya, king of Megiddo, to Amenhotep IV: "...Know O king, that since the archers [the Egyptian garrison] have returned to Egypt, Labaya [king of Shechem] has acted aggressively against me. We cannot...leave the gate because of Labaya...his intent is to take Megiddo. Protect your city so that Labaya will not conquer and destroy it in death, pestilence, and burning."

Another letter, found at the Hittite capital of Hattusas, also mentions Megiddo and a cuneiform fragment of the Mesopotamian Gilgamesh epic found at Megiddo is also attributed to this period. This may attest to the existence of a prestigious scribal school here.

Archaeologists found that Late Bronze Age Megiddo was

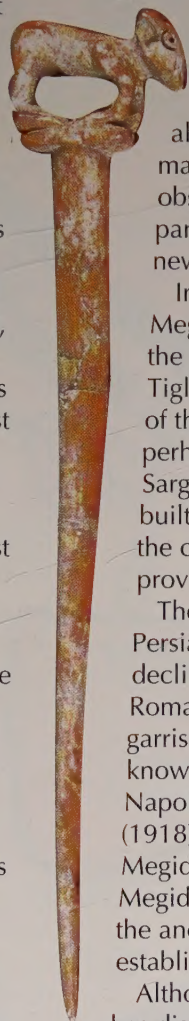
destroyed by fire. The origin of the culprits is hotly debated due to an absence of clear-cut evidence, but archaeologists have narrowed down the field to a number of candidates including the Sea Peoples (the Philistines) and the Israelites.

Megiddo's biblical debut appears in Joshua 12:21, in a list of kings he defeated. Both Joshua and Judges relate that the Canaanites inhabited the city even after its subjugation by the tribe of Manasseh (1 Chronicles 7:29). Remains commonly associated with Israelite presence—four-room houses and so-called “collared-rim jars”—have been connected to the first part of this period, the Early Iron Age.

The period of Solomon has perhaps attracted the greatest attention of scholars, enthusiastic over the possibility of finding the imprint of the Bible's greatest builder and administrator at Megiddo. They identified several structures with Solomon and, although some of these identifications have now been re-evaluated, his presence at Megiddo is still thought to be visible in fine masonry and beautifully designed proto-Ionic capitals that were once mounted on stone pilasters. The ashlar masonry found at Megiddo parallels the description of such masonry in 1 Kings 7:9 and is therefore dated to the tenth century BCE.

These structures, however, were destroyed in the late tenth century BCE, possibly in the

campaign of Sheshonk I (the biblical Shishak). A fragment of a huge stele of the pharaoh was found in the excavations. (Egyptian chronology is well documented and therefore the discovery of relics bearing names of Egyptian historical figures enables the dating of each layer in which the relics were found.)



After this period, Megiddo continued as an important administrative center although Solomon's magnificent palace became obsolete, cut through by part of the 3.6 meter-thick new city wall.

In 733-2 BCE, Israelite Megiddo was destroyed in the wake of Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III's conquest of the land. After 720 BCE, perhaps during the reign of Sargon II, a new city was built at Megiddo becoming the capital of an Assyrian province named Magiddu.

The Babylonian and Persian periods saw the decline of the city. During the Roman period a small garrison was stationed nearby, known as Legio. Later, both Napoleon (1799) and Allenby (1918) defeated the Turks near Megiddo. In 1949, Kibbutz Megiddo, a modern bearer of the ancient name, was established west of the tell.

Although the city of Megiddo has disappeared, its surroundings have never lost their significance as the fateful battleground for hegemony over these crucial crossroads of empires.

*Opposite page:
This box was one
of the items
found among the
Megiddo Ivories.
It is adorned
with griffons, or
mythical animals,
revealing
Assyrian stylistic
influences.*

*Left:
A Megiddo ivory
topped with a
tiny animal. It is
believed that at
least some of the
ivories in this
collection, once
thought to have
been imported in
their entirety,
may have been
manufactured at
Megiddo.*



50 meters

Visitors' Path

Iron Age Reservoir

Iron Age Steps

Late Bronze
Age Palace

Iron Age Gate
(Period of Solomon)

Iron Age Palace
(Period of Solomon)

Bronze Age Temples
(Canaanite Period)

Iron Age
Stables

Northern
Observation
Platform

Late
Bronze Age
Royal Tombs

Observation
Platform

Bronze Age Altar

Chalcolithic
Temple

Observation
Platform

Iron Age
Palace

Southern
Observation
Platform

Iron Age House
(Israelite House)

Iron Age
Houses

Iron Age Palace
(Period of Solomon)





Mario Sermoneta

In the wake of Napoleon's failed 1798-99 Middle East campaign, the Holy Land was rediscovered by the western world: over one hundred scholars and artists arrived in the region at this time and energetically catalogued many of the archaeological and historical treasures of the Near East.

In those early days, archaeology—a term first coined in 1837—was the purvey of a few prodigious scholars who, though fired by the spirit of history that moved in the region, had few tools to gauge the singular importance of the finds they unearthed and subsequently exported by the shipload to their homelands.

Tells—those odd trapezoidal hills that dot the landscape of the region—were thought by some to be podiums on which palaces once stood. In those early days, few realized that they hid within them the treasures of ancient civilizations or that, within the century, a method—stratigraphy—would be invented for comprehending their chronological significance.

Knowledge increased as archaeologists set about



Megiddo Expedition, TAU

exploring the region: the mound of Kununjik, the Assyrian capital of Nineveh; Susa, capital of the ancient Elamites; and Ur of the Chaldees all began to reveal their secrets.

A giant step forward for archaeology came with the work of Sir Flinders Petrie, known as the father of modern archaeology. In 1890, while excavating the site of Tel el-Hesi, west of Gaza, he found that a flash flood had fortuitously torn the tell asunder. Intrigued, he noticed that the mound was comprised of very distinct layers. His genius, however, was in associating each style of pottery shards, excavated in separate layers, with a different period of history.

Petrie's ability to link layers, or strata, to specific historical periods (and a similarly fruitful attempt made shortly after by Gottlieb Schumacher at

Megiddo itself) heralded the beginning of stratigraphic research—and, simultaneously, of modern archaeology.

A tell—the Arabic word for mound—is composed of layers formed over thousands of years by the construction of successive settlements in the exact same location. With each civilization—destroyed in war, by natural disaster, or abandoned by its inhabitants—the tell grows a little more above the surface of the land. It narrows and squares-off as it rises, due to the presence of layer after layer of collapsed walls and other fortifications around its edges. Deciphering the strata, archaeologists number each layer using Roman numerals starting from the top of the tell and working down.

But how did settlements originally evolve? Initially, humans were nomadic hunter-gatherers. But, by the Neolithic period, beginning around 8000 BCE, the practice of hunter-gatherers was replaced by a farming society who chose to live in areas near a spring. Crucially important, the spring enabled them to plant, reap, and raise animals in the same locale year after year.

Having made the transition from a nomadic to sedentary lifestyle—so important that it is known as the Agricultural Revolution—the other vital criteria was their ability to defend their territory from invaders. On this account, high ground was favored.

As the kingdoms of the Near East created and developed connections not only in war but

in peaceful trade as well, the location of a city near a major road was also a distinct advantage. And so, dotted throughout this region were settlements like Megiddo, combining all of the above characteristics, that thrived throughout the millennia.

Just as the establishment of settlements and tells began as the result of a massive change in human circumstances, so many of them ceased to exist at the same moment in history: during his invasion in 333 BCE, Alexander the Great dominated the empire of his predecessors, the Persians, and Greek culture blanketed the region.

In the Land of Israel, some parts of which had never recovered from the Babylonian exile over two centuries before, settlement declined. As a result, many tells were abandoned.

During the Hellenistic period, with the arrival of weapons such as the ballista and the catapult, height was no longer an advantage. In addition, the expansive Greek city planning precluded settlement within the confines of the tell. Therefore, the last stratum found on many tells dates either from the Persian or the Greek period, during which the site became a cultic acropolis.

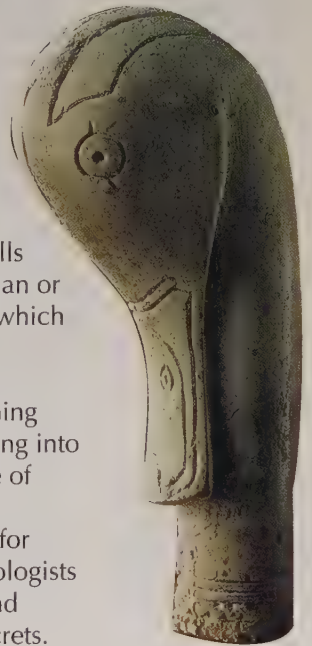
Tells then became looming mysterious archives, passing into local folklore as the home of spirits and heroes, silently waiting out the millennia for history lovers and archaeologists to unearth their relics—and hopefully unlock their secrets.

Opposite page, above: Artist's rendering of a tell. The colors indicate successive civilizations that left behind remains upon which the next inhabitants constructed their own buildings. Eventually, a mound was created.

Opposite page, center: An aerial view of Megiddo.

Below: A bird's head from the Megiddo Ivories.

8
9



Courtesy of the Israel Museum



*Above:
Date palms
sprout from
remains on the
southwestern
side of the tell.
Workers,
brought from
Egypt, left a
calling card:
most of the palm
trees growing on
the tell were
inadvertently
planted by them
as they
discarded date
pips.*

The Book of Books was the inspiration for excavators to turn over the first spade of earth at Megiddo: Megiddo is mentioned eleven times in Scripture including its conquest by Joshua (Joshua 12:21), its reconstruction by Solomon (1 Kings 9:15), and as the location of the death of the two kings of Judah: Ahazia at the hands of Jehu's soldiers (2 Kings 9:27), and Josiah after his confrontation with Pharaoh Necho II (2 Chron. 35: 22).

But, unlike many archaeological sites in the country, not even a hint of the ancient name Megiddo has survived from antiquity in order to identify the site. The connection between the Arabic for Megiddo, Tel el-Mutesellim, the Tell of the

Governors, and Megiddo was first confirmed by the earliest of the site's excavators, Gottlieb Schumacher. Remarkably, in 1322, a Jewish traveler named Estori Parhi pin-pointed what he thought was Megiddo at nearby Lejun, not far from its actual location.

Between 1903-1905 Schumacher's excavations cut a twenty meter-wide trench across the center of the mound. Although the chronological contents of the trench have been lost to later generations of archaeologists, Schumacher was able to use the beginnings of stratigraphic research to make a positive identification of the mound with Megiddo.

Uncovering remains from the Middle Bronze Age, he showed



Megiddo to be far older than Lejun. He discovered various structures that he attributed to King Solomon as well as a cartouche from the invasion of Sheshonk I. A surveyor by profession, Schumacher also left a detailed map of his findings.

World War I brought Schumacher's dig to an abrupt end. Later, excavations were reopened by the Oriental Institute of Chicago under the direction of renowned Egyptologist, James H. Breasted. Here, he sensed that the illusive connection would be made between the archaeological findings in the Holy Land and their significance in understanding the Holy Scriptures.

Unbeknown to them, they constructed their headquarters—now the National Parks Authority visitor's center—including a tennis court, over a significant area of antiquities. They even constructed a railroad around the tell to transport the dig's debris to dumping areas.

Unaware that the area they had built upon was an important part of the ancient city, the archaeologists concentrated their efforts on the tell itself.

P.L.O. Guy, expedition head from 1927, explored the site peeling off layers one by one. Using this method, now defunct, four strata were removed. In

addition, he was the first to use aerial photography in archaeological research with his balloon observations of the site.

Between 1960 and 1972 Yigael Yadin returned sporadically to the site. Excited over what he saw as clear evidence in his dig at Hazor of a gateway almost identical to the Iron Age gate at Megiddo (and another at Gezer in the Ayalon Valley), one of his missions was to positively identify the Iron Age gate of Megiddo with Solomon and the later Israelite kings.

Though they uncovered segments of almost every part of the tell, the frenetic activity of Megiddo's earliest explorers, combined with their methods, led to difficulties in interpreting the vast amounts of data.

Yet, understanding Megiddo is essential to comprehending the history of the Land of Israel, and so Tel Aviv University's Institute of Archaeology Megiddo Expedition has recently returned to the site.

Megiddo, with its rich biblical implications, continues to stir the imagination of scholars and lay people alike. As the dig and the analysis of the findings progress, archaeologists will no doubt hone in on exciting new discoveries with each passing season of excavations.

Far left:
The University of Tel Aviv's Institute of Archaeology Megiddo Expedition gathers for a group photo.

Left:
The Megiddo expedition of Chicago's Oriental Institute, whose excavations were generously funded by none other than John D. Rockefeller.

Below:
Unearthed by the Tel Aviv Expedition, these three seal amulets are carved in the shape of a lion (top) with an engraved base (bottom).





"Then they gathered the kings together in the place called

Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16). This New Testament verse identifies Megiddo, known to millions by its Greek name *Armageddon*, as the site where the great battle between the forces of good and evil will take place at the end of days. This word, which does not appear in any source before the period of the New Testament, is a corruption from the combination of the Hebrew word for mountain, *har*, and Megiddo. Why did John, the author of Revelation, choose Megiddo as this great eschatological battleground?

Simply, it is the most logical route for ancient armies crossing the Land of Israel, and all roads

in the region converged at Megiddo.

Equally, Megiddo was the key to control over the entire country, as shown by this statement from the annals of Pharaoh Thutmose III, written after his 1479 BCE conquest of the city: "Now the chiefs of this country came upon their bellies to kiss the earth because of the might of his Majesty."

During the period of the Judges, the Canaanites, with their "chariots of iron" (Josh. 17:18), were able to keep the militarily inferior Israelites out of the valley and confined to the mountains. Canaanite general Sisera's 900 chariots could not help him when the alliance of tribes under Deborah's general, Barak, finally attacked him. As

Judges 4:14 records, "Then Deborah said to Barak 'Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands.'"

The Philistines, too, had their day here entering the Jezreel Valley via Megiddo. Poised to



Israel Government Press Office

attack them from his position on Mount Gilboa, King Saul died at the end of a debacle with the Philistines. In 609 BCE, King Josiah was also killed in this valley while confronting Pharaoh Necho II, who was passing Megiddo on his way to fight at Carchemish.

Napoleon, in his 1799 attempt to reach the ancient Land of the Euphrates, passed within sight of Megiddo at Afula, chasing the Turks in the same direction that Sisera fled with his army some

2800 years before. Though Napoleon's tattered army returned in defeat three months later, this battle—called the battle of Mount Tabor—was one of his greatest victories.

In 1918, the British (under General Allenby) advanced upon the Valley of Armageddon. Using the combination of surprise and judicious choice of approach roads that had guaranteed victories in the valley down through the ages, he opened the way northward for the capture of Damascus.

"Let all who live in the land tremble," records Joel 2:1 of this great battle to end all battles. "For the day of the Lord is coming...Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old, nor ever will be in ages to come."

From the time of John's writing of Revelation—in the last part of the first century—the belief that the battle at the end of days would be a physical event occurring at Megiddo has been a theme expounded by Christian commentators. John placed that great battle at the end of days in the very same location as virtually every other critical battle for hegemony over Megiddo—and, therefore, over the entire region.

*Opposite page:
Pilgrims draw
inspiration from
Megiddo, the
Book of
Revelation's
Armageddon,
scene of the
great battle at
the end of days.*

*Above, left:
Artist's
rendering of one
of many battles
fought in the
shadow of
Megiddo.
Displayed in the
Megiddo
National Park
museum, this is
the clash
between the
chariot-born
Canaanites and
the Israelites
under Barak.*

*Below, left:
Pope Paul VI
visited Megiddo
during his 1964
visit to the Holy
Land. Seen here
in the company
of Israel's
president,
Zalman Shazar.*

*Below:
A Megiddo ivory
depicts a king
surveying his
captives. Such
scenes were
probably
common in
ancient
Megiddo.*



Courtesy of the Israel Museum



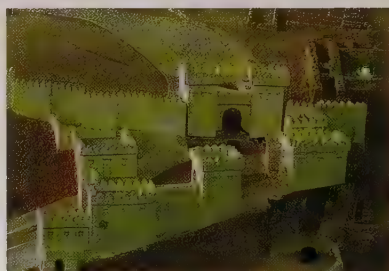
Above:
A view of the surviving eastern wing of Megiddo's Iron Age gate. Two of the gate's chambers can be seen. Between them, a wall of smaller stones may have functioned as a sleeper wall.

Right:
The Iron Age gate as it appears in the city model located in the Megiddo National Park museum.

Fortifications

The construction of fortifications around a city highlights two important facts: that the population has possessions to protect and that they have the cultural, political, and organizational skills to put a large labor force to work for the public weal.

The earliest fortification at Megiddo was constructed during the Early Bronze Age (3300-2200 BCE). Later, during the early part of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1800 BCE) an innovation in city defenses was constructed at Megiddo—a slanted fortification known as a glacis. This fortification continued to serve the city during the subsequent siege of Thutmose III.



Amikam Shooob

Apparently, in the Early Iron Age no wall surrounded the small town and the next fortification discovered by archaeologists dates from the later part of the Iron Age, perhaps from the ninth century BCE. This is the wall seen in the Megiddo model.

Bronze Age Gates

The massive gateway of Late Bronze Age Megiddo is typical of gates of the period. A row of

three rooms flanked both sides of a central, three meter-wide, paved passageway that was broad enough for chariots.

The stones of the gate's walls were small, with an outer layer that was composed of dressed stones well-cut to fit together. Between the fourth and fifth level of stone, the remains of charred wooden beams were discovered.

The lower part of the gatehouse was constructed from basalt rock, the strongest stone available. Yet recent excavations have also unearthed Late Bronze Age buildings outside the gate. Therefore, the gate may have provided access not to the city, but to a stronghold protecting the Late Bronze Age city.

With the destruction of the city at the end of the Bronze Age, the entrance possibly shifted to another location or was purposely blocked.

Following the partial excavation of the gatehouse, the Chicago Institute blocked off most of it in order to construct a railway line around the tell.

In 1992, the Tel Aviv University Megiddo Expedition, in conjunction with the National Parks Authority, removed the obstruction, completed the excavation, and reopened the gate. Visitors are now able to approach the ruins through what is considered one of the best preserved Bronze Age gates in the country.

Remains of an earlier gateway and walls from the eighteenth century BCE were unearthed, east of the Late Bronze Age gate. This gateway contained steps, and as such, during the period



when chariots began to be used, became unsuitable as a passageway. It is possible that the Late Bronze Age gate, with its wider passage and smoother paving, was an innovation in technology called for because of the invention of the chariot.

Solomon's Gate

This Iron Age gate has been attributed to Solomon's reign, principally due to its striking similarity to gates unearthed at Hazor and Gezer, two other cities which the Bible records were constructed by Solomon. An ashlar bearing a mason's mark—a symbol indicating the era of Solomon in other structures—was also found here.

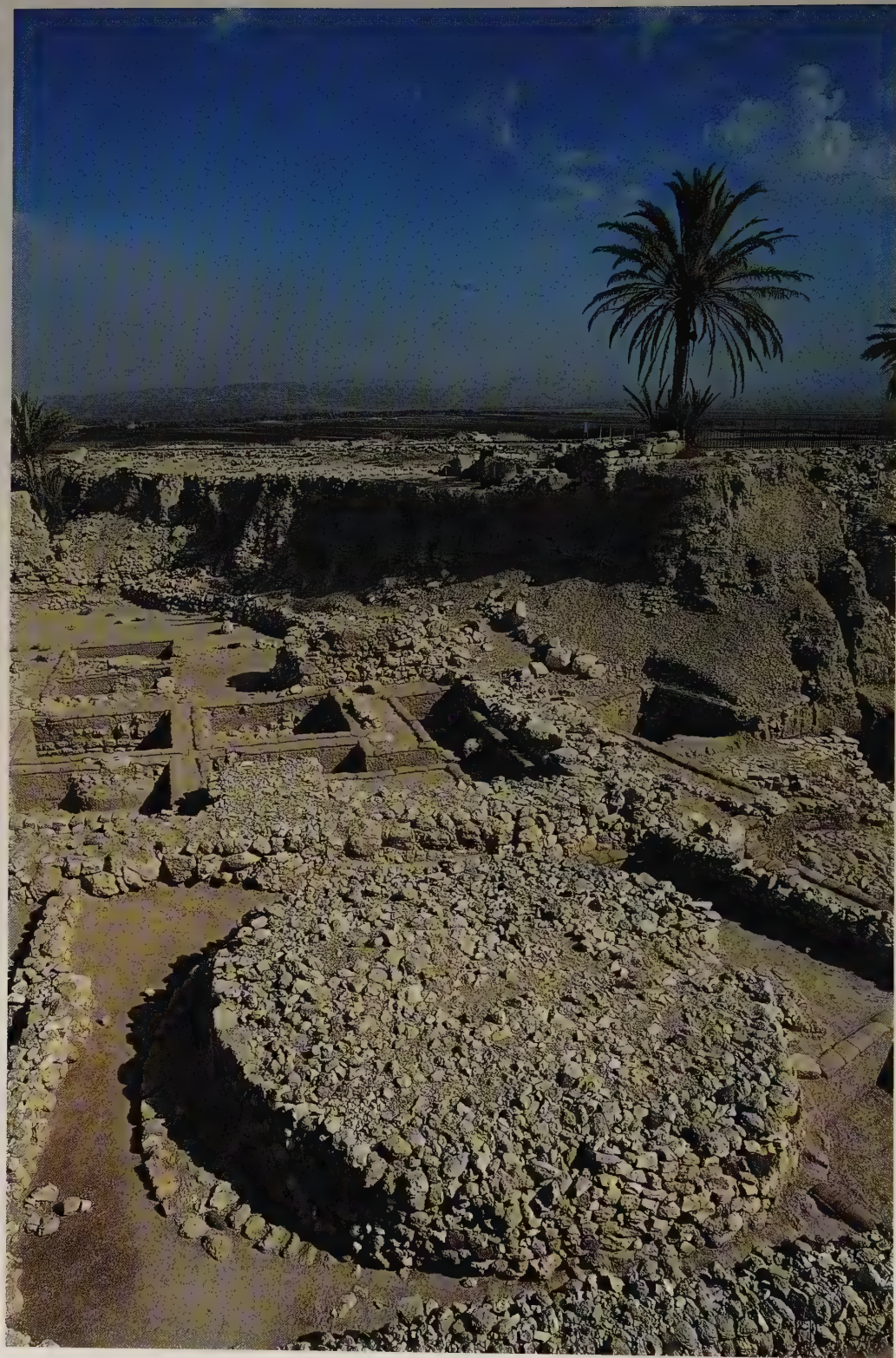
In recent years, the solomonic dating of the gate has been questioned by some scholars who believe it may have been constructed during the period after Solomon's reign (by one of the Israelite kings).

Furthermore, it is possible that the three rooms were actually foundations—composed of both weight-bearing walls, the pylons of the period, and sleeper walls—for the gate that stood above them.

*Above:
The earliest
remains of a gate
and walls at
Megiddo, dating
from the
eighteenth
century BCE.*

*Below:
An exquisitely
detailed carving
of a woman's
head, one of the
Megiddo Ivories.
Although most
of the ivories in
the collection
were intended as
coverings for
decorative
boxes, some
items were
clearly objets
d'art in their
own right.*





The Sacred Precinct

Megiddo's sacred precinct, on the eastern side of the tell, was the religious focal point for the town from its earliest days. The first temple was built during the first part of the Early Bronze Age.



The next innovation in this area was the addition of a round altar, nine meters in circumference, with a flight of seven steps leading to the top. From the large numbers of animal bones discovered in the vicinity of the altar—including one lion bone—it is likely that animal sacrifices were performed here.

The foundations of a massive wall, some forty meters long, have recently been discovered in the sacred precinct. Its layout is still unclear, but it appears to be part of the largest Early Bronze Age temple ever unearthed. On top of the remains of this massive temple are the relics of at least three megaron temples (a megaron is

a long narrow chamber with an open porch flanked by two side wings) dating from ca. 2500 BCE. The roof of the chamber was supported by two columns.

During the Intermediate Bronze Age (ca. 2000 BCE), the precinct became more elaborate with the construction of another shrine, known as the tower temple because of its three meter-thick walls.

At the back of this temple, which served the city until the end of the Late Bronze Age, was a niche where the statue of the deity once stood.

The Massebot Shrine

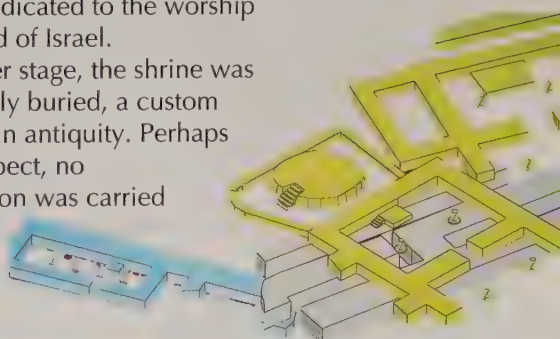
This multi-chambered complex is located at the eastern end of the tell, on the highest point of the mound. Dating from the period of Solomon, the complex included a rectangular shrine containing massebot, or upright, stones constructed on a raised podium. Worshipers entered the room and placed their offerings on a stone table opposite the entrance. Archaeologists believe that this was one of many local shrines dedicated to the worship of the God of Israel.

At a later stage, the shrine was deliberately buried, a custom common in antiquity. Perhaps out of respect, no construction was carried out here after its burial.

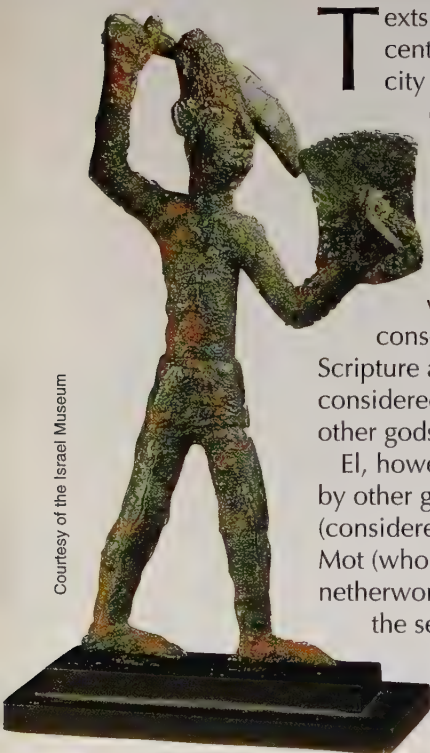
Opposite page: Megiddo's famous round altar. Probably used for animal sacrifices, the altar served as a focal point for religious practices for generations.

Left: Scant remains of one of Megiddo's earliest shrines, dating from the Early Bronze Age.

Below: A computer-generated reconstruction of Megiddo's sacred precinct. In blue: the Early Bronze Age shrine. In yellow: the expanded temple area. In gray: A newly discovered massive wall dating from the Early Bronze Age.



Megiddo Expedition, TAU



Courtesy of the Israel Museum

Texts from the fourteenth century BCE Syrian coastal city of Ugarit have left a detailed description of the deities of ancient Canaan. The most important deity in the Canaanite worship configuration was El who—together with his consort Athirat (known in Scripture as Asherah)—was considered as a ruler above all other gods and goddesses.

El, however, was challenged by other gods, notably Ba'al (considered ruler of the earth), Mot (who governed the netherworld), and Yam (god of the sea). Several cultic statues discovered near an altar, whose use has been

dated to the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries BCE, may have been representations of Asherah. The name Asherah is a familiar one from the Bible; the forbidding of her worship, which the Israelites learned from their Canaanite neighbors, is a constant prophetic theme.

By the end of the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1550 BCE), signs of the female goddess grew rarer in excavations. Within the new fortress-like temple, constructed around 2000 BCE, the only cultic figures discovered were those of a seated and armed god.

Some archaeologists conjecture that the appearance of these statues are a sign that the career of the warlike deity Ba'al—a young and strong figure

who was seen as having a much closer impact on human affairs than his elderly predecessor El—was on the rise.

As ruler of the earth, Ba'al was directly connected to nature, especially rainfall, through his control of thunder and lightning. This important function in the dry land of Israel eventually made Ba'al worship a considerable challenge to leaders of the Hebrew faith.



Courtesy of the Israel Museum

Echoes of this challenge are found in the famous story of Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al enacted nearby on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18).

There is no way of knowing exactly how these or other deities were worshiped at Megiddo. It is likely that, at least in early religious practices, sacrifices were offered as food for the gods, especially on feast days that were probably connected with important events in the agricultural cycle.

Divination was probably practiced by priests in the temples at Megiddo. Sacred prostitutes served in temples, whose services may have been connected with attempts to induce fertility in the fields. The excoriation of this practice is a

common biblical theme.

It is not known what function prayer may have had in the Megiddo temples. Appearing only rarely in the Bible, prayer seems to have been a method of communicating with God that developed over a long period of time. This excerpt from a prayer found in an Ugarit text shows that the worshippers saw Ba'al as more than merely a nature deity, but actually acting in history: "O Ba'al, please drive away the strong one from our gate...The bull, O Ba'al we will consecrate; the sacrifice, O Ba'al, we will fulfill...Then Ba'al will hear your prayer—he will drive away...the warrior from your walls."

As the Israelites became a dominant presence at Megiddo, a change in worship crept in. It was no longer carried out at the central temple, but rather in much smaller rooms where the God of Israel was worshiped. An example of such a room may be the "shrine" belonging to Micah from the tribe of Ephraim, in a story related in Judges 17.

Throughout this period consistent attempts were made to entrench the exclusive worship of the God of Israel. But continued references to Asherah and Ba'al—and the symbols of their worship which even appeared in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kings 23:4)—show that these deities played a continuing part in Israelite religious life and worship.



Courtesy of the Israel Museum

Opposite page, above:
A diorama in the Megiddo National Park museum depicting worship on the round altar.

Opposite page, below:
A statue of Ba'al in a "smiting" position, discovered in Megiddo's fortress-like temple.

Left:
A stand used in religious ceremonies.

Below:
An altar with four raised corners, known in the Bible as "horns."



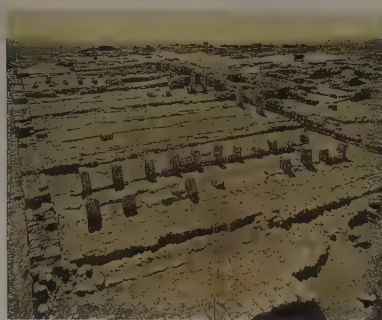
Above:
**One of several
feeding troughs
discovered in the
stables.**

Below:
**The interior of
the granary.**

The Granary

The seven meter-deep granary was constructed during a rebuilding of the city in the Assyrian style and therefore probably dates to the period of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721-705 BCE). In contrast to his predecessor at the site, Tiglath-pileser III, the policy of Sargon II (or one of his successors) was to repopulate the town with new residents from outside the country. As a result, the settlement did begin to flourish again, reaching a population of some 2000 residents.

Granaries of this size functioned as a central supply



Megiddo Expedition, TAU

*Left:
The stables as
they looked
shortly after
their excavation
by the Oriental
Institute of
Chicago. Clear
of the vegetation
that once
partially
concealed them,
their expansive
dimensions can
be appreciated.*

*Below:
A delicate
decoration from
the Megiddo
Ivories.*

“Solomon’s Stables”

On the basis of the verse in I Kings 9:19 that notes Solomon’s construction of “cities for chariots and cities for horsemen,” two sets of structures were entitled with the name “Solomon’s Stables.” They both consisted of long rooms, with rows of pillars dividing the side rooms from the central ones. Many pillars had holes cut into them, believed to be where ropes were tied to secure animals.

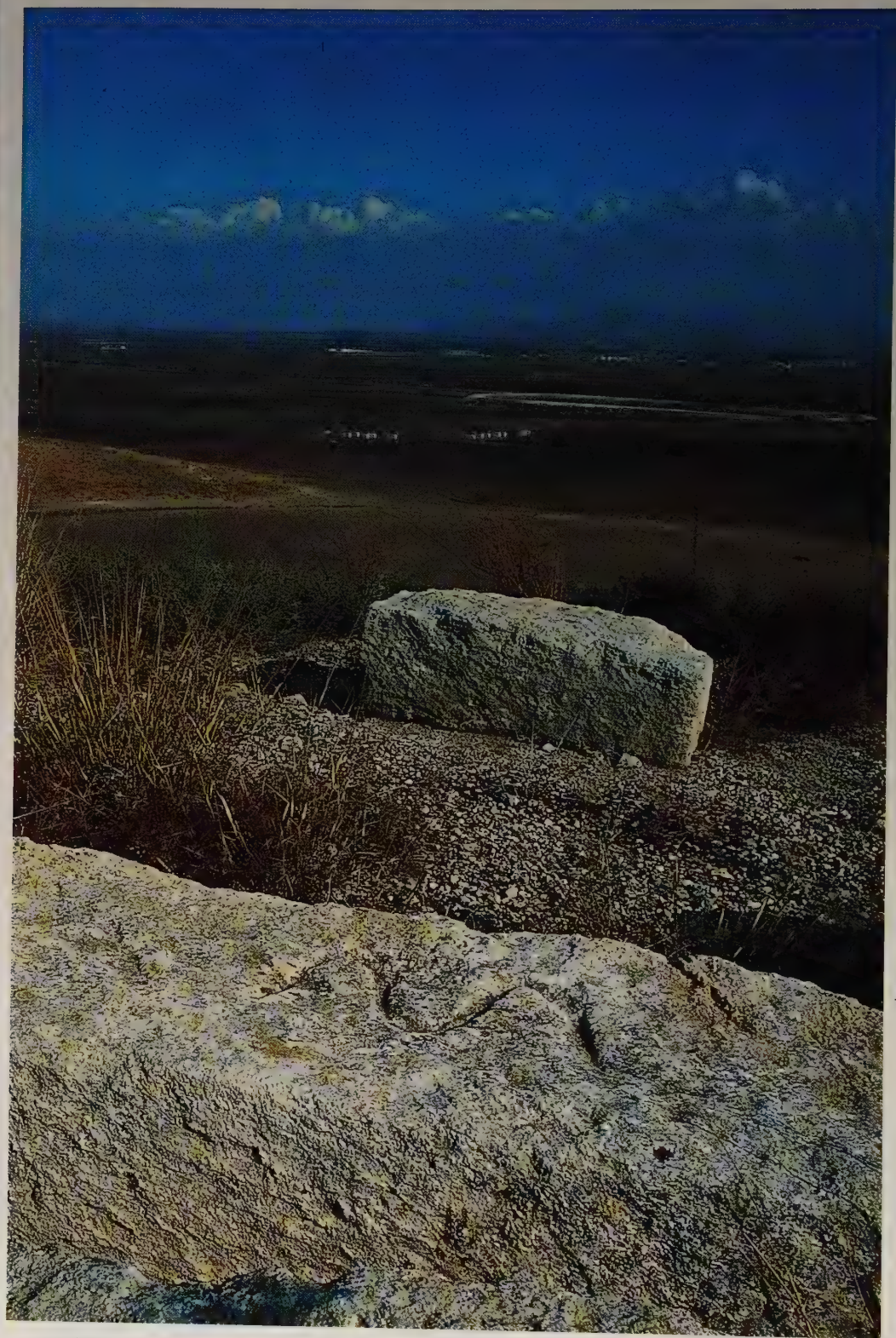
However, not all scholars agree that these structures were used as stables. Some question how horses would be led in and out of such a narrow building with only one opening, and wonder at the lack of any remains of bridles or chariot fittings. Others conjecture that these buildings were storehouses in which small pack animals would have been tethered. The large area fronting the southern complex, believed by some to have been the exercise yard for horses, might actually have been a market area. It is now believed to date not from the days of Solomon, but from the reign of Ahab, during which cities underwent a boom in construction—outstripping even that of Solomon’s time.

depot maintained by the governor in order to feed the population during war, when the town would overflow with refugees from the surrounding villages. The granary had a capacity of 450 cubic meters, enough to hold approximately 12,800 bushels. Its walls were plastered with small stones, and two flights of circular steps reached the bottom.

The remains of grain among the stones leaves little doubt about its function. Still, there are several unanswered questions such as how it was roofed, and how the steps were used to access a grain-filled interior.



Courtesy of the Israel Museum





during the reign of Solomon. This palace, of which only some foundations remain, was a rectangular building whose style closely parallels the style of palaces constructed during the same period in northern Syria.

Another palace, probably used

more as a residence than this more ceremonial structure, is located on the southern side of the tell and was possibly connected to the northern palace by a special road.

This southern

palace was accessed by a two-chambered gateway decorated with proto-ionic capitals.

Within the palaces, excavators found pottery from the tenth century BCE reign of Solomon. Typical Iron Age ashlars helped date the buildings, as did masons' marks. These mysterious symbols appear with no identifiable pattern, leading archaeologists to believe that they may have had magical or ritual significance.

Around the perimeter of the tell, archaeologists have found remains of a massive four meter-wide inset-offset wall, dating from the early tenth century BCE. It was found to have cut right through the northern palace, indicating that the palace had fallen out of use by this time—possibly due to the invasion of Sheshonk I.

Opposite page: Stones removed by early excavators (from now unknown locations) dot the tell. The one in the foreground bears a mason's mark, an indication that it probably belonged to the period of Solomon.

Above: Relics of the wall around the courtyard of Solomon's southern palace.

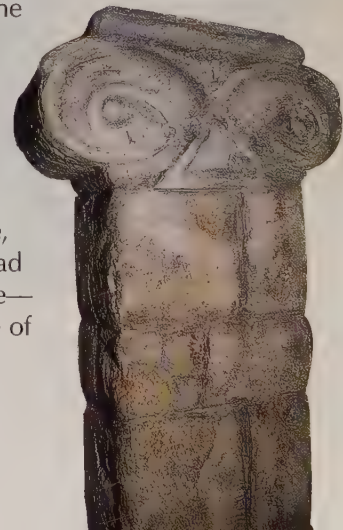
Left: A view of the Megiddo model in the museum, showing a portion of the huge inset-offset wall constructed in the early tenth century BCE. Beyond it is Solomon's southern palace.

Below: A proto-ionic capital, the type which decorated many Israelite buildings.



The great King Solomon, architect of the foreign policy that put the kingdom of Israel squarely on the international map of his day, understood the importance of Megiddo and other strategically located cities over which he reigned. The Bible relates that Solomon ordered a corvée labor force to build the Temple, his palace in Jerusalem, the capital's city wall, and the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer among other projects. Megiddo—governed by Ba'ana, the son of Ahilud (who was married to Solomon's daughter)—was the capital of what was probably the richest of the twelve administrative districts in Solomon's kingdom.

In the northern section of Megiddo, a huge public building was excavated. Archaeologists have determined that it was one of the palaces constructed





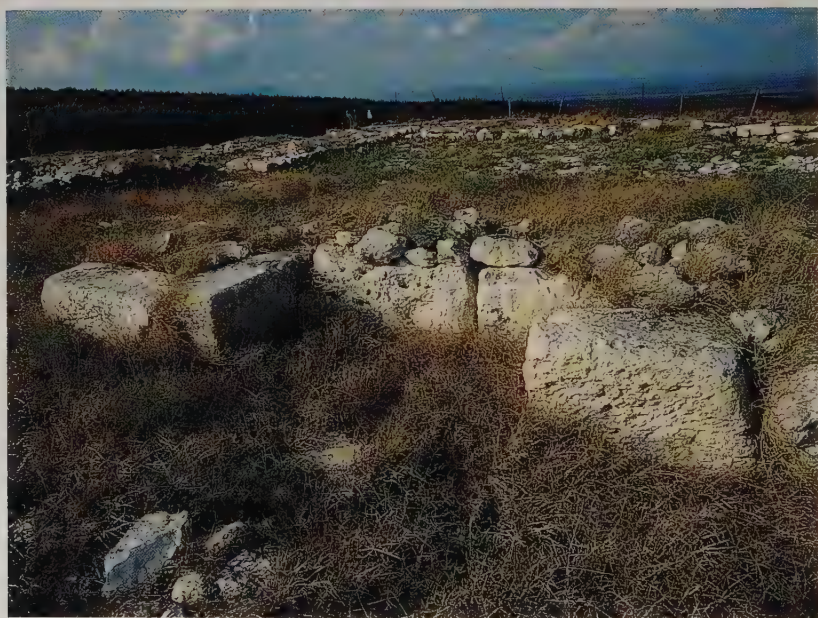
Megiddo Expedition, TAU

Above:

The extensive remains of the Assyrian palace.

Right:

A niche in the wall of the chamber of the Assyrian palace which may have served as the location of the throne.



In 733-732 BCE, the long arm of Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, or "Pul" as he is known in the Bible, reached the land of Israel and Megiddo. 2 Kings 15:17 relates that King Menahem of Israel gave the Assyrian invader a thousand talents of silver—apparently overdue tax payments—extracted from his wealthy subjects, and Tiglath-pileser III departed the land.

But later, during the reign of King Pekach, when tax payments were overdue once more, Tiglath-pileser III returned to order the exile of a number of Israelites, presumably including the residents of Megiddo (2 Kings 15:29). The city then lay abandoned until the reign of Sargon II, who repopulated and reconstructed it.

The Assyrians brought with them a new style of town planning: the orthogonal city plan. According to this design, city streets were planned to intersect at right angles, forming the ancient equivalent of city blocks of an almost consistent twenty-two square meters each.

This is the only example of early near-eastern grid system city planning to have been

excavated thus far. Most of the remains of buildings, viewed by visitors along the tourist trails of Megiddo's National Park, date from this period.

One of the best examples of an Assyrian building at Megiddo is the palace—the most complete Assyrian palace in the country—located on the north side of the tell. Most probably the residence of the highest Assyrian administrator or military governor of the city, the palace was located in the prestigious area adjacent to the city gate. It had a spacious open courtyard surrounded on all sides by rooms.

At one end of the courtyard was a room that may have been the royal audience chamber. Its entrance was presumably flanked by two monumental pillars, of which only the bases have survived. A niche in the wall may have contained a throne, behind which a bathroom may have existed—a feature common to Assyrian palaces.

*Left:
A unique
polychrome
glazed jar from
the period of the
Assyrian
occupation of
Megiddo.*

*Below:
A metal pivot, to
which a door
post was once
attached, was
found in the
ruins of the
Assyrian palace.*

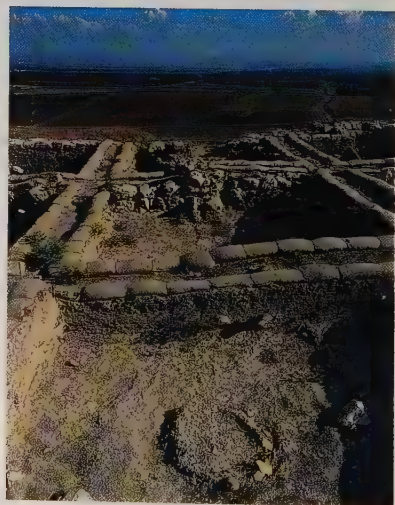




Above:
A Philistine-style jug bearing a painted scene of a man playing a lyre and leading a procession of animals.



Below, left:
Remains of a house destroyed by the Assyrians.



Below, right:
The walls of this house may have witnessed the invasion of Sheshonk I.



*Left:
Remains of a
mud brick wall
dating from the
Iron Age. Mud
brick was a
common
building material
used in antiquity.
But, because it
does not often
survive the
ravages of time
and exposure, it
is a rare sight in
excavations in
Israel.*

Dwellings typical of Iron Age Megiddo were excavated at the eastern end of the tell. One of them was probably a one-storey structure, whose walls were made of sun-dried mud bricks that were laid on a stone foundation. Roofs, made from wooden beams, were held together with a thick layer of lime plaster.

Archaeologists from the Megiddo Expedition of Tel Aviv University found large cooking ovens embedded in the floor of this one-storey structure, leading them to estimate that it may have been a residence supporting some kind of cottage industry.

Evidence of destruction was found in one corner which, together with pottery remains, has led scholars to attribute its destruction to the early tenth century BCE—perhaps the time of Sheshonk I's invasion.

A House Falls to the Assyrians

Another house has been partially excavated near the Assyrian palace. Archaeologists of the Megiddo Expedition of Tel Aviv University have dated this house to the eighth century BCE. It was not a domestic residence, but used as an industrial complex for an unidentified product. This house contains the first tangible signs of destruction of the Israelite level of habitation at Megiddo, perhaps during the invasion of Tiglath-pileser III.

Evidence of the importance of Megiddo as a trade depot at this time was found in the house in the form of bullae, or lead seals, probably of Phoenician origin.

Tantalizingly little of this house has actually been unearthed; archaeologists have decided to limit exploration here, as further excavation would encroach on the remains of the Assyrian palace.



By the Iron Age, the expansion of the city and its height upon the tell had distanced it from the nearest spring. Located northwest of the city, the water flowed from a fault line some thirty-five meters below the height of the mound. Therefore, at this time, residents of Megiddo invested resources in the problem of how to



provide a secure and reliable water source.

One of the city's simpler water systems was located north of Megiddo's city gates, and has been dated to the ninth century BCE. A flight of steps below and north of the gate, long thought to have provided pedestrian access to the city from beneath the gate, led down to a deep cistern to which water was channeled from a nearby spring.

The first complex city water system was probably introduced during the reign of the early Israelite kings in the ninth century BCE. At its earliest stage, it consisted of a long narrow gallery, or corridor, whose walls were constructed of

well-dressed ashlar, similar to those used for other public buildings of the same period. This gallery was intended to provide 'short-cut' access to the spring below. Excavators discovered a headless skeleton in a cave, which they determined to be a guard posted at the entrance to this all-important municipal resource.

The inset-offset wall of ninth to eighth century BCE Megiddo was constructed over the gallery, blocking it and preventing its further use. At this time, a square shaft some thirty-five meters deep was bored into the ground near the southwestern segment of the new wall which was closest to the spring. Steps descended from the top of the shaft to a point underground where it sloped off to become a tunnel.

At the same time, the original entrance to the spring from the outside was blocked off with the construction of a large wall. Finger prints, made by the ancient builders of this wall, were found in the plaster mix.

At a later stage of its construction, engineers realized that if they were to reverse the gradient of the tunnel to face into the city, the spring water would flow all the way to the bottom of the shaft and they could use it as a well. The underground portion of the stairs was then removed, because residents would, by this time, be standing on a platform constructed above the shaft, dropping down skins or jars to the water level below.

*Opposite page:
The flooded
Megiddo water
tunnel during
winter. This
photo was taken
before the new
lighting system
was installed
beneath the
walkway.*

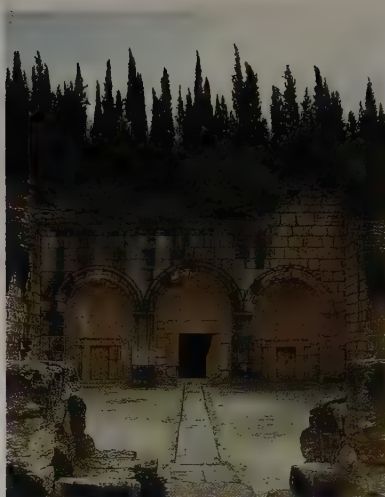
*Left:
Steps leading
down to the
opening of the
water system's
thirty-five meter-
deep shaft. At
the most
advanced stage
of the system's
construction,
spring water
flowed from its
source beyond
the city walls,
through the
tunnel, to the
bottom of the
shaft.*

28
29



Courtesy of the Israel Museum

National Parks Authority



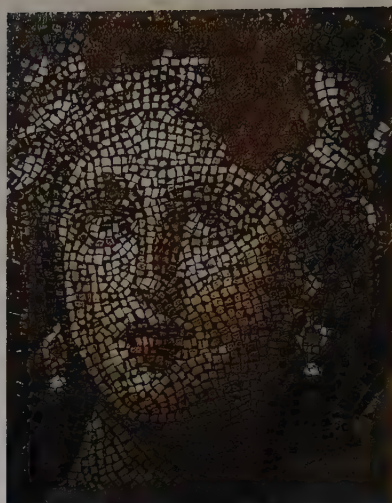
Beit Shearim National Park

This historic park is located in a beautiful Mediterranean woodland setting in the Jezreel Valley, some twenty-five kilometers southeast of Megiddo. In addition to a synagogue and an olive oil press, the main attractions at Beit Shearim are the twenty or so catacombs that dot the site—the cemetery for the Jewish city that flourished here between the second to the fourth centuries. Two of these dramatically lit burial caves, filled with engraved stone coffins, are open to visitors.

From around 200 CE, Beit Shearim served as the capital of Jewish life in the Galilee. It was the seat of the *Sanhedrin* and home of Rabbi Judah the Prince, redactor of that part of the Oral Law known as the *Mishna*.

A facade of one of Beit She'arim's fascinating burial caves.

Izak Malki



Tzipori National Park

At Tzipori, also once the seat of the *Sanhedrin*—the supreme Jewish legislative body during the Roman era—are the remains of the wealthy homes of the late Roman and Byzantine period, including magnificent mosaic floors. One of the homes has been reconstructed and shows a particularly fine floor depicting dozens of Dinosian drinking scenes and the delicately crafted image of a woman's face. Known as the "Mona Lisa of the Galilee," some scholars conjecture she may have been the mistress of the house. The town's water system, that channeled water from springs in the Nazareth mountains, has been restored and is an exciting part of a visit to this National Park, located some forty kilometers northeast of Megiddo.

"Mona Lisa of the Galilee"—detail of a magnificent Tzipori mosaic.



Amikam Shooib

Ma'ayan Harod National Park

This recreation park, some twenty kilometers east of Megiddo, is located in the foothills of Mount Gilboa. It is the site where the biblical judge Gideon tested the alertness of his troops in an effort to select the fittest of his men to fight the Midianites.

Above the spring are the tombs of Yehoshua Hankin, known as the "redeemer of the land," and his wife. In order to increase Jewish settlement, Hankin purchased more than 600,000 dunams of land in the region during his lifetime.

On site are lawns, wooded areas, a swimming pool, dressing rooms, a parking lot, camping facilities, and a restaurant. Nearby is Kibbutz Ein Harod, established in 1920.

The glistening pools of Ma'ayan Harod nestle among landscaped lawns.



Mount Carmel National Park

This 20,000 acre National Park, located twelve kilometers north of

Megiddo, is a nature lover's dream come true, situated on the mountain range made famous by Elijah's contest with the prophets of Ba'al. Gently rolling hills are richly wooded with natural forests of both Mediterranean woodland species, such as oak and Palestine pistachio, and various species of evergreen. Hai Bar, a nature reserve in which the presence of indigenous animals and birds is being fostered, is also located within the park.

Nature trails of varying lengths crisscross the park, and information stations provide tips on how to tour the Carmel National Park.

The rocky Carmel and an ancient oak greet visitors to this mountain park.

Neolithic period 8300-4500 BCE

The first settlement is established on the site of Megiddo.

Chalcolithic period 4500-3300 BCE

The settlement expands and unites into a community—both culturally and politically.

Early Bronze Age 3300-2200 BCE

Megiddo's first massive city wall is constructed and first international connections are established. A palace and additional temples are constructed.

Intermediate Bronze Age 2200-2000 BCE

Megiddo, like many other sites in the country, is abandoned.

Middle Bronze Age 2000-1550 BCE

Massive fortification of the city continues, and well-built domestic residences appear. The tell begins to take its characteristic shape, with the introduction of the first glacis.

Late Bronze Age 1550-1200 BCE

First Asian campaign of Pharaoh Thutmose III results in his 1479 BCE takeover of the city.

Early Iron Age 1200-1000 BCE

Biblical records (Joshua 12: 21) indicate the capture of the city by Joshua, and its inclusion in the allotment of the tribe of Manassah (Joshua 17:11).

Iron Age 1000-586 BCE

Megiddo becomes the administrative center of the region under Solomon. In 933 BCE, Megiddo is conquered by Tiglath-pileser III and laid to waste.

Persian period 587-332 BCE

Small Persian settlement is constructed, the last city to be built on the mound.

Hellenistic period 332-152 BCE

Megiddo loses its hegemony to coastal cities and trade routes, and Tel Megiddo is abandoned. Nearby a small town, Kfar Othnai, is founded.

Hasmonean period 152-63 BCE

Villages in the Jezreel Valley become the property of the Hasmonean dynasty.

Roman period 63-324 CE

The base of the Roman sixth legion builds a camp at Legio, about one kilometer northwest of Tel Megiddo.

Byzantine period 324-640 CE

Christianity comes to the region and pilgrimage routes pass near Megiddo but do not bestow the scriptural significance to the site characterized by later Christianity.

Early Arab period 640-1099

In 635 CE, Muslim armies penetrate the Jezreel Valley from the east, sweeping across it to control the Mediterranean coast and prevent the Byzantine navy from striking back.

Crusader period 1099-1291

The population of the area around Megiddo falls under the administration of the Galilee Principality, with Nazareth as its capital.

Mameluke period 1250-1516

In 1260, the Mamelukes defeat the Mongol armies at Ma'ayan Harod, southeast of Megiddo, ensuring continued Mameluke rule of the region.

Ottoman period 1517-1917

Napoleon defeats the Turks at Afula, northeast of Megiddo, in 1799.

British Mandate 1917-1948

General Edmund Allenby scores a fateful victory against the Turks at Megiddo.

Establishment of the State of Israel 1948

Megiddo and nearby Lejun, held by the Iraqis, are taken by the armor and infantry of the Golani Brigade of the Israel Defence Forces.

NATURE RESERVES AND NATIONAL PARKS



1. NIMROD'S FORTRESS N.P.
2. NAHAL HERMON N.R. (BANIAS)
3. TEL DAN N.R.
4. HURSHATTAL N.P.
5. NAHAL AYOUN N.R.
6. HULA N.R.
7. TEL HAZOR N.P.
8. ACHZIV N.P.
9. YEHIAM FORTRESS N.P.
10. BAR'AM N.P.
11. KORAZIM N.P.
12. YEHUDIYYA N.R.
13. GAMLA N.R.
14. KURSI N.P.
15. HAMAT TIBERIAS N.P.
16. EIN AFEK N.R.
17. ZIPPORI N.P.
18. MT. CARMEL N.P.
19. HAI BAR CARMEL N.R.
20. NAHAL ME'AROT N.R.
21. BET-SHE'ARIM N.P.
22. TEL-MEGIDDO (ARMAGEDDON) N.P.
23. KOHAV HAYARDEN (BELVOIR) N.P.
24. MA'AYAN HAROD N.P.
25. GAN-HASHLOSHA N.P. (SACHNE)
26. BET-ALPHA N.P.
27. BET-SHEAN N.P.
28. CAESAREA N.P.
29. ALEXANDER RIVER N.P.
30. SAMARIA N.R. (SEBASTE)
31. MEKOROT HAYARKON N.P.
32. AFEK N.P. (ANTIPATRIS)
33. SOREQ CAVE N.R. (STALACTITE AND STALAGMITE CAVE)
34. EIN-HEMED N.P. (AQUA-BELLA)
35. CASTEL N.P.
36. JERUSALEM WALLS N.P.*
37. QUMRAN N.P.
38. HERODION N.P.
39. ASHQELON N.P.*
40. BET-GUVVRIN - MARESHA N.P.
41. EIN-GEDI ANTIQUITIES N.P.
42. EIN-GEDI N.R.
43. MASADA N.P.
44. TEL ARAD N.P.
45. ARAD VISITOR CENTRE
46. ESHKOL N.P. (HABSOR)
47. TEL BEER-SHEVA N.P.
48. MAMSHIT N.P. (KURNUB)
49. SHIVTA N.P.
50. BEN-GURION'S BURIAL PLACE N.P.
51. EIN-AVDAT N.P.
52. AVDAT N.P.
53. MAKHTESH RAMON VISITOR CENTRE
54. HAI-BAR YOTVATA BIBLICAL WILDLIFE N.R.
55. CORAL BEACH N.R.



Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority

מגידו אנגלית חוברת
מחיר: 18.00 ש"ח



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